



Liz Gustafson, MSW
State Director
Pro-Choice Connecticut
Testimony for Public Hearing
Labor and Public Employees Committee
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S.B. 312: An Act Concerning the Expansion of Connecticut Paid Sick Days

Dear Senator Kushner, Representative Porter, and esteemed members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee, my name is Liz Gustafson, State Director of Pro-Choice Connecticut. We testify in strong support of S.B. 312: *An Act Concerning the Expansion of Connecticut Paid Sick Days*.

Connecticut has historically been a leader in the fight for reproductive freedom, and ensuring all individuals can care for their health and their families is a critical measure our state must take to advance racial, gender, and economic justice. In 2011, Connecticut became the first state to require certain employers to provide paid sick days; however, the law only applies to employers with 50+ employees in certain service occupations. Additionally, Under existing law, covered workers are only eligible to use paid sick time they've accrued after they've worked 680 hours, which is inaccessible to part time workers or those with multiple jobs.

Reproductive freedom requires having real choices to support if, when, or how an individual decides to start or grow their family, and the expansion of paid sick days supports equitable caregiving and further contributes to gender equity. Under current law, workers can only use paid sick time to care for a child up to the age of 18 or a spouse, defined as husband or wife. The law does not include time to care for extended or chosen families and leaves out workers who care for loved ones outside of the traditional "nuclear" family. **It is time to make sure no one is left behind by expanding the law to include all types of family structures and relationships.** Under S.B. 312, workers can use paid sick days to care for a spouse, child of any age, grandparent, grandchild, parent, sibling, and any individual related to the employee by blood or affinity who is the equivalent of family.

The expansion of Connecticut paid sick days is a matter of racial justice, as workers of color are overrepresented in industries that do not provide paid sick days and are far more likely to lack access to the benefit than white workers. This has only been compounded by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, as women and people of color are overrepresented in frontline jobs that carry greater risk of exposure to the virus but continue to lack critical support like paid sick leave. Communities of color have faced the most severe economic and health consequences of the COVID-19 crisis. **Inequality in access to paid sick leave only deepens the harm and economic injustice.**

In moving this policy forward, paid sick days should be accessible to all regardless of employer size, industry or job classification. Pro-Choice Connecticut largely supports S.B. 312, as Connecticut workers and their families have waited long enough for accessible and equitable paid sick days. **We urge lawmakers to expand paid sick days so that it is equitable and accessible to *all* workers.**

Thank you very much,

Liz Gustafson
State Director
Pro-Choice Connecticut